

**St. Elias the Prophet**  
**Romanian Orthodox church**  
Ellwood City, Pennsylvania



**110<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration**  
**1914 – 2024**

# St. Elias the Prophet Romanian Orthodox Church

Visit us:

425 Cherry Way  
Ellwood City, PA 16117



<https://sites.google.com/view/st-elias-church/home>

Contact us:

Fr. Wayne cell phone: 330-760-4124

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**St. Elias the Prophet  
Romanian Orthodox Church**



**Troparion — Tone 4**

**An angel in the flesh and the cornerstone of the prophets, / the second  
forerunner of the coming of Christ, / glorious Elijah sent grace from on  
high to Elisha, / to dispel diseases and to cleanse lepers. / Therefore, he  
pours forth healings on those who honor him.**

**St. Elias the Prophet Orthodox Church  
110<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration  
1914 - 2024**

**PROGRAM OF FESTIVITIES**

**Friday July 19, 2024**

**5:00 pm: Light Lenten Supper at Parish Life Center  
Kindly bring a covered Lenten Dish for this evening**

**6:30 pm: Greeting of Archbishop Nathaniel and Memorial Service**

**7:00 pm: Great Vespers and Litia**

**Saturday July 20, 2024  
Feast Day of St. Elias the Prophet**

**8:30 am: Festal Matins**

**9:30 am: Hierarchal Divine Liturgy**

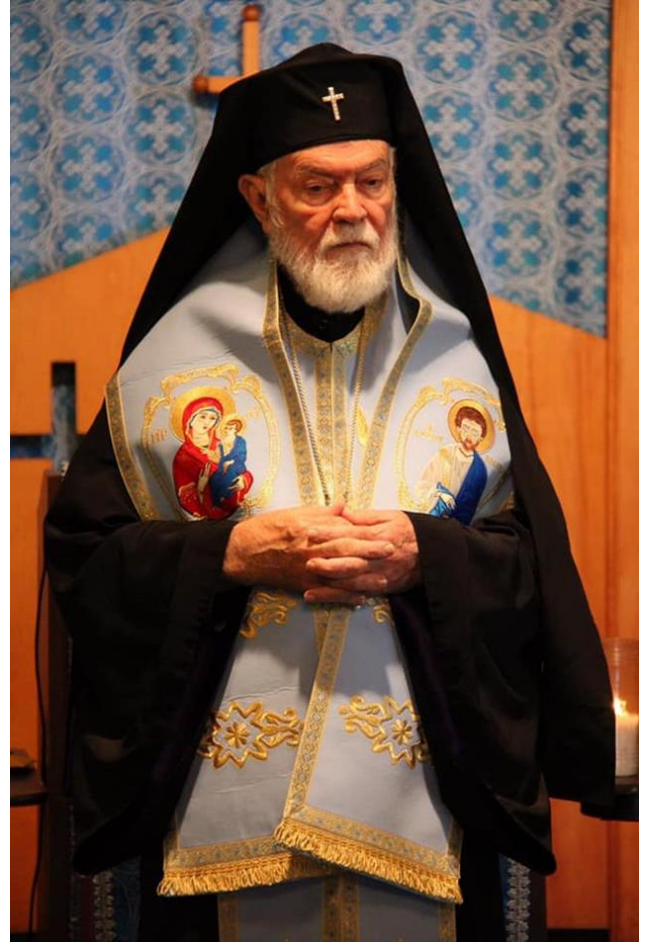
**Thanksgiving Service for 110 Years**

**Parish Photo**

Elwood City, Pennsylvania  
110 YEARS Anniversary - 2024

SAINT ELIAS ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN PARISH!

We give thanks to God for the many decades of service to the Orthodox community of Elwood City, Pennsylvania. The faithful who came together in this small Pennsylvania steel town brought with them their dedication for hard work to raise a family, and to be able to worship in a language and in a way most familiar to them. Over the generations the parish has seen the difficulties of the first world war, second world war, and through the decades, which have sent many of its young men and women to serve their adopted nation. However good their intentions were, many of the younger generations relocated to various parts of the nation, but the parish continued to serve those who remained at home. On this occasion of the 110 year anniversary of its existence, the episcopate, its parishes and monasteries send greetings to Father Wayne, Preoteasa Lenora and all the parishioners. We are thankful for the dedication of those families who continue to support the parish by being present for its activities, both religious and social. We ask God to bless all those celebrating this event and I assure them of our love and support for the future years to come.



*Nathaniel,*

*Archbishop of Detroit and the ROEA*

**Dear Parishioners and Friends of St. Elias Romanian Orthodox Church,**

It is my honor as Parish Council President to write this letter on the occasion of the 110<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our parish. As a relative newcomer to Ellwood City, it has been interesting and enjoyable to learn about those who came before- the founders and the builders. There have been many changes throughout the years, but I believe the thing that has remained the same is the warm family feeling of the parish. It is what drew me to St. Elias when I first moved to Pennsylvania. The welcome that I was given touched my heart, and I know that I am not the only one to have experienced it. I think that this heartfelt welcome is why our parish has endured and is starting to grow again. I look forward to new generations discovering the warmth and family of our church. In closing, I would like to quote our former Parish Council President, Docia Jacobs, who fell asleep in the Lord in 2022:

“We have been truly fortunate to have the guidance and support from God, the archbishops, our priests, and the monastery community who have helped us maintain the warm, strong unit of our parish family...

God bless Orthodox Christians here and everywhere, and may He grant us ‘many more years.’”

Yours In Christ,

*Sheila Bolton*  
*Parish Council President*



**The Orthodox Monastery of the Transfiguration**  
**321 Monastery Lane Ellwood City, PA 16117**  
**724-758-4002**  
**[www.OrthodoxMonasteryEllwoodCity.org](http://www.OrthodoxMonasteryEllwoodCity.org)**



July 5, 2024

Rev. Father Wayne Paul Wright  
St. Elias the Prophet Orthodox Church  
Ellwood City, PA

**Dear Father Wayne and Faithful of St. Elias Church,**

We greet you with much joy and gratitude as you celebrate the 110<sup>th</sup> anniversary of your parish, and your dedicated service to our Lord and the community of Ellwood City.

Your parish has assisted our monastery since its very founding, including hosting V. Rev. Mother Alexandra, our foundress, in your parish house for some time during the construction of our first building. Later, several gentlemen were frequently called upon to repair, paint, garden and mow, or to assist us during times of need or emergencies. The ladies of the parish provided assistance with cooking for our annual feast day pilgrimage and other events. And for nearly four decades your parishioner, Gregory Thetford, has faithfully and meticulously served as our monastery caretaker.

All of these acts of kindness and care for our monastery, along with the prayers of your dedicated priests and parishioners, are remembered, and eternally appreciated. May God reward all, both the living and the departed, who have assisted us.

We are pleased to join you for this celebration of God's goodness and your own faithfulness, as we appreciate and always look forward to your participation in our Patronal Feast on August 5 and 6<sup>th</sup>, as well as the celebration of our Lord's Holy Pascha, and other feast days throughout the year.

May God grant to all of you, with your pastor, Father Wayne, many and blessed years!

In Christ,

V. Rev. Mother Abbess Christophora  
With the monastery sisterhood

**My Dear Brother, Fr Wayne Paul, and Faithful of St Elias!**

**CHRIST IS RISEN!**

It would have been my joy to be with you, but unfortunately it isn't possible. I do thank you for your invitation.

The Holy Milestone of reaching 110 years of preaching the Gospel for the Ellwood City community is a blessing for your parish family, the priests who led the faithful, and the surrounding area. I know it was a constant challenge. It is a now a time to be thankful and to look forward.

I pray that the Lord will build you up and encourage you to double your efforts and to increase the harvest.

My prayers and best wishes are with you, as is the Holy Prophet Saint Elias.

**La multi ani!**

*Protopresbyter Laurence Lazar (ret)*





## Glory to Jesus Christ!

St. Elias the Prophet, founded now over 110 years ago. I wonder if those Forty-one men and women even considered the possibility that their efforts would now encompass the Church that they so desperately strived to establish, with now a membership of the third and fourth generation of those founders. Our small, but active, parish continues the tradition of the founders, and more importantly the one true faith, the Holy, Catholic, Apostolic faith, as originally established with the first Pentecost now almost 2,000 years ago. Those Romanian immigrants, the initial founders of this parish, from the first meeting on February 1, 1914, joined by a number of Macedonian immigrants, having escaped the communist yoke throughout the European Continent, committed themselves, their personal fortunes as meager as they were, to have an Orthodox Church in which to worship God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit, as they had been able to do in the 'Mother' country, before the communist onslaught, and without fear of reprisal.

The rich history of St. Elias, those men working in the factory's and giving as much as they could spare to establish a Church to celebrate the Divine Liturgy, providing all they were able, to ensure that they may have a Church to serve the community of Romanian and Macedonian immigrants in Ellwood City, and the surrounding area, and looking to the future. They formed a Ladies Auxiliary, and later realizing the need for a Church School established the school, with one of the first teachers being Docia (Jinar) Jacobs, who as the earlier history indicates was about sixteen years old when she started and continued to be an important and integral part of keeping the Sunday School an active part of the St. Elias family. The Church still has a weekly Sunday School during the usual public-school period, now being taught by

Preoteasa Lenora Wright, assisted by Erin Calloway as the need dictates. It would be remise if we did not stop, and with heartfelt contemplation give thanks to God for all those members, supporters, and the many parish council members that worked countless hours to maintain this strong community, I am especially reminded of our sister in Christ, Marian Gib, who was a very active member of the Ladies Auxiliary, St. Mary's, and for this parish, who at the age of 100 fell asleep in the Lord on February 1, 2024. May our great God, and Savior, Jesus Christ, grant Eternal Repose in blessed sleep to the souls of His servants departed and make their memory eternal.

Upon being ordained to the Holy Priesthood by His Eminence, Archbishop Nathaniel in February 2021, it was requested that I would come to Ellwood City, PA., serve the Vespers on Saturday evenings, then the Service of Matins and the Divine Liturgy on Sundays. This community of Romanians, and Macedonians, descendants of those original founders, now joined by other nationality's, Greek, Russian, Jordanian, and some of a mix of nationalities, embracing this beautiful Orthodox faith, celebrating the services in the English language. The Orthodox Church in America, of which the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America is a Diocese of, holds a Clergy Synaxes every three months. At one of the Synaxis', it was noted by some of the clergy in the Zoom Chat Room, that they were the priest of smaller parishes, like St. Elias in membership, but following the Pandemic and the ability to again have services in the Church, they were closing! The two years of lock down caused most members, for their own reasons, to not attend the live services, and they stopped financially supporting their Church. These Churches were closing their doors. Not, however, were the parishioners of St. Elias here in Ellwood City. A fact that all our parishioners can be especially proud of.

I, and Preoteasa Lenora, are truly honored to be given the privilege of serving St. Elias the Prophet Romanian Orthodox Church. Each of you, who are in fact the Church. I pray that as this parish moves forward in service to God, and His Holy Church, all her parishioners may be granted all good things throughout their lives, peace, love, prosperity, and good health.

Your humble servant in the Lord,

*Rev. Fr. Wayne Paul Wright*





## A BRIEF HISTORY

The following historical data of St. Elie Romanian Orthodox Church has been derived through the writings of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Booklet in 1964, Fr. Anchidim Useriu, the 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Booklet in 2004, Fr. Pantelimon Stanciu, and the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Booklet in 2014, Fr. John Schmidt.

Our parish, one of the oldest in the Ellwood City, Pennsylvania community was founded on July 20, 1914, the Feast of St. Elie the Prophet, by a collective group of both Romanian and Macedonian immigrants (membership was estimated at around 400). The historical record from the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary tells us that there were 41 initial founders of the Church. These men and women, now living a strange new country, many having left their families back in the 'Mother Country', seeking a new life for themselves and their spouses, their children, looking forward to a better life for each of them. Not just greater financial stability, but freedom to worship God as they chose, away from the oppression of the communist yoke of terror.

They, the ancestors of a few of our still active members of our parish, came together initially on February 1, 1914, and formed a Parish Council, elected officers to guide the members towards the formation of a parish, and on July 20, 1914, the Feast of Saint Elias the Prophet, officially established this parish, now celebrating 110 years of Orthodox worship in the Ellwood City community. In an article penned by the Parish Priest Anchidim Useriu who served the parish from March 1963 through 1969, Fr. Useriu tells us that one the ardent members of Sf. Ilie Romanian Orthodox Church, Mr. Ilie Radulescu, who served as the first Parish Council President, traveled for three years

to the surrounding cities, soliciting funds from all those he could find, to be able to build a Church, and in 1917 the construction of their new Church was begun, with completion in 1918.

In 1923 a Ladies Auxiliary was formed, St. Mary, but did not become active and lay dormant for five years. In 1929 a renewed effort established a Ladies Auxiliary, which was renamed "Buna Vestire ", (Annunciation) and remained very active beyond the Fiftieth Anniversary in 1964.

In 1957 a chapter of AROY (American Romanian Orthodox Youth) was established, with the initial meeting on May 27, 1957, at St. Elie Romanian Orthodox Church chaired by Mr. John Trutza, National President of A.R.O.Y. ELL-ROY was an active and viable part of the Church and assisted in many areas of the parish, and was a contributor to the Church Sunday School, teaching of the Romanian language, and a source for the better understanding of the Orthodox religion.

Also, in 1957 a Church Choir, St. Mary's (Theotokos), was established by Fr. Eugene Banciu (1957-1959), with the supervision of Mr. Paul Ghem who was the music director at Lincoln High School, with Mrs. Aurelia Barson as Director, and Mr. Ben Jinar as Assistant Director. In 1963 Mrs. Aldena Jinar became the organist.

Also in 1963, Fr. Anchidim Useriu, realizing the importance of Religious Education for the youth, along with the parents, started a Church Sunday School, with Docia Jinar, who would have been sixteen years old at the time, as one of the teachers, and she continued as a teacher for the Sunday School until her Falling Asleep in the Lord in December 2022. She would become Docia (Jinar) Jacobs and serve as President of the Parish Council for several years of dedicated leadership.

Fr. Pantelimon Stanciu (1997-2006), in the 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Booklet, reminded us of the visit by His Grace, Bishop Polycarp (Morusca) in 1935 when he consecrated the Church, and the parish was officially enrolled in the Romanian Orthodox Church in the United States. In 1950 construction began of the Parish House on the property adjoining the Church building, which is utilized for the Sunday Church School, Parish Council meetings, the Sunday Coffee Hour, and facilities for the priest to stay on weekends.

Fr. John Schmidt (2006-2020), in the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Booklet, spoke to the integration of many ethnic origins that comprised the membership of St. Elias, coming from Romanian, Macedonian, Russian, Greek, Jordanian, and Middle Eastern backgrounds, worshipping in an English language service, and adding responses in words and phrases from different backgrounds.

*Rev. Fr. Wayne Paul Wright, Parish Priest*



**CHRISTMAS CAROLERS** . . . Romanians who settled in Ellwood City brought customs and costumes with them as this picture of Romanian Orthodox Christmas carolers in 1923 indicates. In the picture, which appeared in the *Pennsylvania Heritage* with the story above, were the following: Standing left to right — Gligor Mailat,

deceased, church secretary, Nick Savu, John Buner, deceased, Nick Columbus, deceased, Paul Luca, John Ursu, Michael Columbus, Charles Luca and Emil Luca deceased. Rev. Zida, pastor of the St. Elie Church at the time, is seated. Sam Luca is on the floor in front. Both Rev. Zida and Sam are deceased.

ELL - ROY



**Left to Right: First Row:** Docia Jinar, Anica Sokol, Rev. Useriu and Preoteasa Useriu. **Second Row:** George Sasaran, Anna Cavallaro, Jennie Ursu, Mary G. Neghiu and Helen Borza. **Third Row:** Frances Tirlea and John Neghiu, Jr. **Fourth Row:** Andre G. Gib, John A. Neghiu, John Sokol, Sr., Nicoleta Useriu and John Sokol, Jr.

SAINT ELIAS PARISH CLERGY  
2014 - 2024

+Archbishop Valerian

+Bishop Polycarp

Priests that have served in this parish:

1917	+ Fr. Romulus Doctor
1918-1919	+ Fr. Nicolae Clontea
1919	+ Fr. Romulus Doctor
1919	+ Fr. D. Constantinescu
1920	+ Fr. Ioan Podea
1920-1921	+ Fr. Irime Delea
1921	+ Fr. Traian Damian
1922	+ Fr. Ioan Podea
1926	+ Fr. Ilie Zida
1926-1927	+ Fr. Georghe Popa
1927-1928	+ Fr. Ilie Moisa
1928-1930	+ Fr. Traian Birau
1930-1942	+ Fr. Ilie Ghenie
1942-1943	+ Fr. Vasile Pascau
1944-1956	+ Fr. Ilie Ghenie
1957-1959	+ Fr. Eugen Banciu
1959-1962	+ Fr. Traian Vintila
1963-1969	+ Fr. Anchidim Useriu
1970-1977	+ Fr. Traian Vintila
1977-1978	+ Fr. Nicolea Moldovan
1981	+ Fr. Nicholas Solak
1982-1992	+ Fr. Raymond Samoila
1993-1995	Fr. Eugene Rosu
1995-1996	+ Fr. Raymond Samoila
1997-2006	Fr. Pantelimon Stanciu
2006-2020	Fr. John Schmidt
2022-	Fr. Wayne Paul Wright

## St Elias Parish Council Presidents

1914 - 2024

1914	Ilie Radulescu	1941-1943	Ioan Boariu
1915	George Branza	1944	Traian Lazar
1916	Zaharie Oprea	1945-1946	Ioan Boariu
1917	Zacharie Tescula	1947	Petru Nichifor
1918	Mihail Craciun	1947	George Barson
1919	Fr. Nicolae Clontea	1948-1951	Ioan Boariu
1920	Ioan Irimie	1952-1953	George Barson
1921	Vasile Luca	1954	Nicolae Savu
1919	Iosif Savu	1956	Petru Nichifor
1922	Nicolae Dolgae	1958-1959	Nicolae Columban
1923	Grigore Mailat	1959-1961	George Tirlea
1923	Ilie Barbu	1962-1964	George Barson
1924	Vasile Luca	1965-1969	John Sokol
1925	Iosif Savu	1970-1987	George Barson
1926	Simion Popescu	1987	Pete J. Neghiu
1927	Ioan Popescu	1988-1990	Bob Rice
1928	Petru Felegan	1993	Gregory Thetford
1929	Ilie Barbu	1994	Mary Rugh
1930-1931	Nicolae Dolgae	1995-1998	Gus Hatzis
1932	Simion Popescu	1999-2002	Gregory Thetford
1933	Ioan Popescu	2003-2004	Adrian Draghiciu
1934	Ignatie Luca	2005-2008	Gregory Thetford
1935	Aurel Luca	2009-2011	Mahera Hanna
1936	Grigore Mailat	2012-2013	David Lordi
1937	George Tirlea	2014-2022	Docia Jinar Jacobs
1938-1939	Ioan Boariu	2022-	Sheila Bolton
1940	Iosif Savu		



St Elias the Prophet Romanian Orthodox Church

St. Elias parish started the New Year of 2024 with the following list of members.

Mark & Vicki Baka, son Blake

Harriet Hatzis

Zenaida Bench

Kenneth & Gabriela Hogue

Rachael (Jacobs) Bischoff

John & Caliope Katsadas

Sheila Bolton

Zina Neghiu

Jeremy & Erin Calloway, daughters Iris & Sophia

Rodica Constantine

Jone & Nada Nonevski

Adrian & Delia Draghiciu

Matilda Preda

Oranija Erka

Ratka Radevski

Diann Fulmer

George Sasaran

George Gib, Jr.

Sbdn, Gregory &

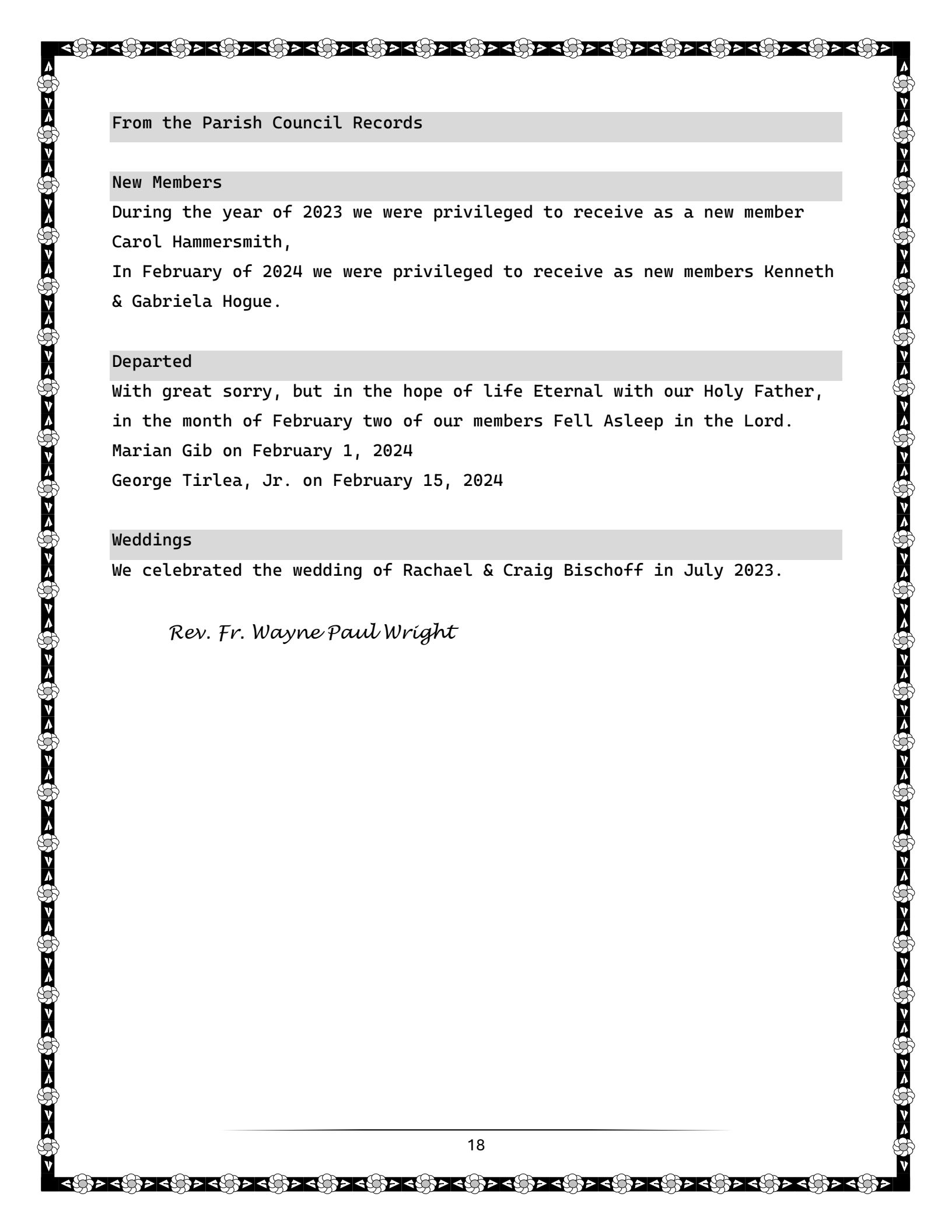
Carol Hammersmith

Juliana Thetford

Mahera Hanna

Pra. Lenora Wright

*Rev. Fr. Wayne Paul Wright*



From the Parish Council Records

New Members

During the year of 2023 we were privileged to receive as a new member  
Carol Hammersmith,

In February of 2024 we were privileged to receive as new members Kenneth  
& Gabriela Hogue.

Departed

With great sorry, but in the hope of life Eternal with our Holy Father,  
in the month of February two of our members Fell Asleep in the Lord.

Marian Gib on February 1, 2024

George Tirlea, Jr. on February 15, 2024

Weddings

We celebrated the wedding of Rachael & Craig Bischoff in July 2023.

*Rev. Fr. Wayne Paul Wright*



Photograph of the Congregation on the 13th Anniversary of the Parish July 4, 1927.



Photograph of the Congregation on the 25th Anniversary of the Parish.  
The Late Bishop Policarp Morusca was present at this memorable occasion.